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HKG to Require New Health Certificates for Seafood Products

Report Categories:

FAIRS Export Certificate Report

Agriculture in the News

Fishery Products

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Report Highlights:

The Hong Kong government (HKG) is proposing new food safety control measures on seafood imports by introducing a regulation that would impose mandatory certification requirements. To this end, the HKG has provided the U.S. government a draft of the information and attestation requirements for the new health certificates. Once the regulation is passed the new certificate will be required to accompany U.S. seafood exports to Hong Kong.

Summary:

The Hong Kong government (HKG) is tightening up food safety control measures on seafood imports by introducing a regulation stipulating mandatory certification requirements. This new measure, once enacted, will require U.S. seafood exports to Hong Kong to be accompanied by an approved health certificate.

Currently, U.S. exporters do not provide health certificates on a compulsory basis. However, many Hong Kong importers do request U.S. exporters to provide health certificates for marketing purposes and to expedite import procedures. U.S. exporters provide different certificates issued by different agencies, such as the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) or state departments of health or economic development. At present, the Hong Kong government accepts these certificates as long as they are issued by government organizations, regardless of whether they are federal or state agencies. Given the absence of legislative requirements in Hong Kong, the U.S. certificates may carry different attestation language, depending on the issuing agency.

In preparation of the new regulations the HKG has recently provided the Agricultural Trade Office in Hong Kong with a generalized draft health certificate and attestation form for comment.

While it is clear that the HKG will accept certificates only from competent authorities, it seems that the HKG does not intend to accept only federal certificates and is open to accepting states' certificates as well. However, it is highly likely that they would demand the same information or attestation on the health certificates, regardless of issuing authorities.

If members of the U.S. seafood trade wish to provide comments on the certificates and attestations being developed by the HKG, they are encouraged to contact the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office in Hong Kong so that we may take these views into account during our course of discussions with the HKG. The contact address is:

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The Regulation

According to the HKG's proposal, each import consignment of cultured live or unprocessed aquatic products are required to be accompanied by a health certificate issued by the health authority of the place of origin. However, the HKG has acknowledged that it may be impractical to require health certificates for wild-caught aquatic products, and they are proposing to require these consignments to be accompanied by a self-declaration, suggesting that the declaration be signed by the master of the vessel,

recording details of the catch. The HKG also intends to prohibit the import of live puffer fish and other live aquatic products with high risk of tetrodotoxin. For processed aquatic products (except those of puffer fish where a health certificate will be required), they do not intend to impose any specific import control measure on the products at this stage.

For clarification the HKG has provided the following definitions:

“Aquatic products” means fish, shellfish, amphibian or any other form of aquatic life other than a bird, mammal or reptile.

“Unprocessed aquatic products” means aquatic foodstuff that have not undergone any processing, and includes products that have been divided, parted, severed, sliced, boned, minced, skinned, ground, cut, cleaned, trimmed, chilled, frozen, deep frozen or thawed.

"Processing" means any action that substantially alters the initial product, including heating, smoking, curing, maturing, drying, marinating, extraction, extrusion or a combination of those processes.

"Processed aquatic products" means aquatic foodstuff resulting from the processing of unprocessed products. These products may contain ingredients that are necessary for their manufacture or to give them specific characteristics.

Time Frame

While there is no definite timeframe for when the regulation will be finalized, the HKG is planning to introduce the regulation to the Legislative Council next year (2011), and is clearly moving forward as shown through the contacting various stakeholders to refine its approach.

Sample Certificate Suggested by the HKG

**SANITARY CERTIFICATE
COVERING AQUATIC ANIMALS AND AQUATIC PRODUCTS**

(LETTERHEAD or LOGO)

 Identification
number: _____

Country of Dispatch: Competent Authority: Certifying Body:

I. Details identifying the aquatic animals and aquatic products

Description of animal /product	Species (scientific name)	State or type of processing	Type of packaging	Lot Identifier/ date code	Number of packages	Net weight
Sum :						

 Identification number of the seal of container (if appropriate)

Temperature required during storage and transport: _____ °C

II. Provenance of the aquatic animals and aquatic products

 Address(es) and/or the Registration number(s) of aquaculture farm(s), production area(s) or production establishment(s) authorized for exports by competent authority:

 Name and address of
consignor:

III. Destination of the aquatic animals and aquatic products

The aquatic animals / aquatic products are
to be dispatched
from:

(Place of dispatch)

to:

(Country and place of destination)

by the following means of
transport:

Name of consignee and address at place of
destination:

IV. Attestation

The undersigned certifying officer hereby certifies that:

- 1) The aquatic animals or products described above originate from (an) approved farm(s) or establishment(s) that has been approved by, or otherwise determined to be in good regulatory standing with the competent authority in the exporting country;
- 2) The aquatic animals have been produced, packed, stored, and transported under sanitary condition, which were under the supervision of competent authority and in accordance with the requirements laid down in Codex Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products;
- 3) The aquatic products have been handled, prepared or processed, identified, stored and transported under a competent sanitary programme consistently implemented and in accordance with the requirements laid down in Codex Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products;
- 4) The aquatic animals or products have been inspected and quarantined by the competent authority and do not found harmful levels of microorganisms, harmful substances and foreign substances regulated in the exporting country and Hong Kong;
- 5) The aquatic animals or products meet veterinary sanitary requirements and are fit for human consumption.

Done at

(Place)

on

(Date)

(SEAL)

(Signature of certifying officer)

(Name and official position)

Tel:

Fax:

E-mail: (optional)